

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 28, 1828.

MR. WILLIAMS MADE THE FOLLOWING REPORT:

The Committee on Commerce, who were instructed by a resolution of the Senate, dated the 13th ultimo, to inquire into the expediency of making an additional appropriation for removing obstructions at the mouth of the Pascagoula river, ask leave to make the following REPORT:

The importance of deepening the channel at the mouth of the Pascagoula, has, for some time, been sensibly felt by the State of Mississippi. At the first session of the 19th Congress, a memorial from the Legislature of that State was presented to the Senate, praying the aid of the government of the United States to accomplish an object so important to a large portion of that State, whose own resources were entirely inadequate to the end in view. This memorial was referred to the Committee on Roads and Canals; and a report was made, which your Committee beg leave to adopt as part of their own.

This report is so full in point of detail, and so broad as to general principles, that it would, perhaps, be unnecessary to pursue the inquiry further, but for reasons which will be unfolded in the sequel.

In accordance with this report, a bill was reported to the Senate, and passed that body, appropriating eight thousand dollars for this object, but was not acted on in the House of Representatives until the last session, when it received the sanction of that branch of the Legislature, and became a law.

In pursuance of this act, an engineer was directed last summer to repair to the spot, with the view of making the necessary examinations, previous to the commencement of the work, and the amount of the appropriation was placed to his credit, for its completion. In exploring the different passes (three in number,) through which the Pascagoula disembogues itself into the Gulf of Mexico, it was found that a channel of more than five feet water could not be effected with the sum at his command; and having been instructed to obtain a depth of *seven feet*, corresponding with the draft required for vessels approaching New Orleans through lake Ponchartrain and bayou St. Johns, he concluded that the object of Congress could not be accomplished with the funds at his disposal, and therefore reported the facts to the De-

partment of War; and the question now is, shall the additional sum named by this officer, amounting to seventeen thousand five hundred dollars, be granted by the federal government.

Doubts having been expressed by the officer charged with the examination already mentioned, as to the utility of the proposed improvement, the Committee have sought information from such other sources as were at hand; and two statements have been presented to them, and are annexed to this report. The first is from Mr. Dinsmoor, who was formerly United States' agent to the Choctaws, and resided several years on one of the principal branches of the river Pascagoula: The other is from Mr. W. Barton, who, for several years, resided at the mouth of the river, also in the service of the United States. Those gentlemen are well known to several members of the Senate, and are considered by them to be very capable of making proper estimates of the material facts involved in the present question, and incapable of imparting to their statements deceptive aspects.

From them, we learn, that the country which would be benefited by the proposed improvement, is very extensive. Four or five counties within the State of Mississippi, depend on it entirely for an egress to the ocean. The lands on the water courses are generally alluvial, and very fertile, well adapted to the culture of sugar and cotton. The timber, consisting of yellow pine, cedar, cypress, and white oak, is abundant, and of the finest quality; and the means of supplying naval stores, inexhaustible. These riches of the forest are entirely occluded from a market, for the want of a port at the estuary of this river; and it is understood, that if the bar was removed, a safe harbor within it can be found, with twenty feet water and a bold shore. This port would be the depôt for all the country above. The productions of the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, as well as the Pascagoula itself, would be brought hither in steam-boats and other river craft, and from thence seek a market elsewhere, in vessels fitted to navigate the ocean.

There is one other consideration in favor of the contemplated work, which, although last mentioned, is perhaps the first in importance. It is well known that a considerable coasting trade now exists between New Orleans, through the bayou St. John's and lake Ponchartrain to Mobile and Pensacola; and this trade will be necessarily extended to the new settlements forming near Tallahassee, in Florida, and on the Chatahoochee, in Georgia. From Apalachicola and St. Marks, a brisk intercourse must, in all probability, be kept up with the *great Emporium of the West*, and every vessel engaged in this commerce, must, of necessity, pass directly by the mouth of the Pascagoula. Between the bay of Mobile and the Rigolettes, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, there is now no harbor. The importance of having a safe retreat from sudden squalls, in a hurricane latitude, is too apparent to require illustration.

From these views of the subject, your Committee are of opinion that the advantages which would result from the improvement in question, are sufficient to justify the appropriation required for its accomplishment, and recommend that it be made accordingly.

## No. 1.

*Letter from Silas Dinsmoor, late Agent of the United States to the Choctaw Indians.*

SIR: Agreeably to your request, I present you a few memoranda on the navigation of Pearl river, and the resources of the adjacent country. In the spring of the year 1816, I built a boat in the fashion of a Kentucky flat, at a point on Pearl river, about five miles east of the late Agency house, and about one mile from the site of the old Fioux town, where Turner Brashears lived. From that point I descended the river with my family, to Pearlington, where I embarked in a schooner for Mobile. In the whole route, I found no natural obstruction to navigation, in the bed of the river, nor any accidental obstruction, except at the Great Raft, so called, some distance below latitude  $31^{\circ}$  N. This raft, being a collection of logs, aggregating for an indefinite number of years, obstructed the passage on the main channel of the river for some distance. I evaded the difficulty by passing a thoroughfare, or cut-off, communicating with Boleecheato river, and met with no other obstruction to the mouth of the river.

At the time I descended, the water was at a good height for boating, and the contingent obstruction of sunk logs was not observable. A few years previous a large barge, loaded, came up at a low state of water, within a short distance of the place where I commenced my voyage. From the information derived from the patron, and the fact of his arrival, I am persuaded it would require but a small comparative labor to saw the logs at low water. Those specifically lighter than water would float away; the few more ponderous could easily be removed from the channel. This done, and the removal of the Great Raft would open a good channel for steam-boat navigation; and, of course, a good descending passage for all boats and rafts from the conflux of Yakanookunnee with the Pearl river, which is by water about thirty miles above the town of Jackson; and the whole distance, judging from the difference of latitude and the sinuosities of the river, I should estimate at about four hundred miles. This estimate of distance could easily be corrected by the actual survey of the meanders of the river, in the whole extent already returned to the General Land Office. The trees growing on the banks of the river, present another obstacle to the free passage of steam-boats, particularly the willow, sycamore, and black or yellow birch. They in many places incline towards the water, in an angle of from thirty to sixty degrees from the zenith. The specific gravity of the two latter, would not admit their floating away, and they ought to be deposited on the banks.

The resources of the country would seem to justify any required expenditure for the removal of all the impediments to navigation. The lands adjacent are well suited to the culture of cotton, and all other useful products of the climate. In their natural state, the low grounds are covered with large forests of cypress, cedar, walnut, mulberry, poplar, sycamore, birch, and abundance of the *largest and best quality of*

*white oak for staves and ship plank.* The upland abounds with the best quality of hard pine and post oak. Wherever the hard pine abounds, it furnishes the terebinthe in all its modifications, for naval stores and other purposes—the crude turpentine, its essential oil, and exsiccated resin, tar and pitch. The post oak would seem to claim the particular attention of political economists. The groves of live oak are disappearing. The post oak is the next best timber for naval construction. It is less ponderous, but in durability it is *second only*, if not equal.

The streams tributary to Pearl river, are equal to any in the southern country for propelling machinery to convert timber into plank, and for other purposes. The proposed improvement of the navigation would afford sufficient facilities to convey the produce to market, and receive returns, and thereby promote the public and individual interest.

It may be worthy of notice, that since the application of steam to propel vessels, all the inconveniences of internal navigation, arising from the tortuous course of our southern rivers, are obviated. Since steam-boats do move *with* the wind, *without* the wind, and *against* the wind, and current too, and with a velocity unknown to any other navigation, sails and masts are useless encumbrances.

Excepting the Great Raft on Pearl river, all the remarks on its navigation and its resources, present and prospective, are applicable to the Pascagoula. I have read with some surprise the report of Lieutenant Bowman. He is under a mistake as to facts, particularly as to the population of the Pascagoula. It is well known that its navigable waters traverse four of the eastern counties of your State. Twenty-one years ago, I built a boat at the Chickasaha agency house, and traversed the river to the mouth. While the French were in possession of the country, they built two schooners at their establishment at Chickasaha town, more than seventy miles above Winchester, and took them down the river freighted with peltries, corn, pease, &c. Its course is very sinuous, but perfectly practicable to be made navigable for steam vessels; and sail vessels ought not to be used. That the natural resources of the country have not been put in requisition, is owing to the bar at the mouth of the river. Lumber and naval stores require large vessels to transport them; these cannot enter the river, and the outer road is too boisterous for rafts to be taken out with safety. I have no doubt of the accuracy of Mr. Bowman's survey of the bar, and his estimate of the expense, but I would draw a different inference as to the expediency of immediate improvement. Make the *port*, and trade will flow to it as naturally as the river flows to the ocean.

I am, respectfully, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

SILAS DINSMOOR.

The Hon. THOMAS H. WILLIAMS.

1st April, 1828.



## No. 2.

*Letter from W. Barton, late Register of the Land Office at Jackson Court House, Mississippi.*

WASHINGTON CITY, 1st April, 1828.

GENTLEMEN: I have looked over the report from the Engineer Department, relative to the removal of the bar at the mouth of Pascagoula river, and in compliance with your request, submit the following remarks upon that subject.

Admitting, implicitly, the correctness of the report in all that concerns the practicability of the purposed improvement, the best mode, and the estimated expense of effecting it, &c., I must, nevertheless, take the liberty of dissenting, in the most unqualified manner, from the opinion expressed in the report, viz: "*that no considerable advantages are derivable to the community, from the proposed improvement, viewed in the most flattering light, and under the most auspicious circumstances.*"—Report, p. 7. This opinion, as I shall presently show, is predicated upon an assumption of facts not warranted by the real and true state of things. The report proceeds to state, p. 6, that "the lands upon the *Pascagoula* are *unsettled*, with the exception of a *small establishment* at its mouth. The western bank is incapable of cultivation, being a *high sandy bluff*, covered with a heavy growth of *pine*. The other side of the river offers more encouragement to laborious industry; it is a *narrow unreclaimed marsh*, fertile, highly capable of improvement, and by the investment of sufficient capital, will richly reward the cultivator. That region of country lying contiguous to the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, for many miles before their junction, like the *Pascagoula*, is *poor* and *thinly* inhabited, &c. At Winchester, *three hundred miles* from the mouth of Chickasaha, is rich, and comparatively thickly settled." "My inquiries for information on this subject, have been addressed to individuals *competent* to answer them, and in whose *veracity* implicit confidence may be placed." I do not, of course, pretend to know, except from the report itself, the sources whence the information upon which it seems to be principally founded, have been drawn; but, if the foregoing statement in relation to the *settlement, topography, geography, &c.*, of the country, is to be regarded as evidence of the character of the informants, I am quite sure the writer of the report must have been grossly deceived in supposing them to be individuals in whose *competency* and *veracity* implicit confidence ought to be placed. So far from the lands on the *Pascagoula*, (with the exception of a *small establishment* at its mouth,) being *unsettled*, the entire space, (with intervals such as are always to be found in newly settled districts,) on both sides of the river, from its *mouth* to the confluence of the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, (one mile below the 31° of north latitude,) is very generally, though not thickly settled; and, in proof of this assertion, I refer to the records of the General Land Office, by which it may be

seen that *upwards of one hundred donations*, founded on *actual settlement*, have been granted to settlers on and near the Pascagoula river. I know of but three *bluffs* on the west side of the river, and neither of these exceeds two miles in length; the remainder of the land bordering on the river is *rich cane land*, susceptible of cultivation, and, in fact, cultivated in numerous plantations. The *east side* of the river, which is represented as a *narrow unreclaimed marsh*, is, in reality, very little different from the west side. The land on both sides, is, indeed, "fertile, highly capable of improvement, and by the investment of (a small amount of) capital (in levees) will richly reward the cultivator." The "region of country lying contiguous to the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers," is not, as stated in the report, *poor* and *thinly* inhabited. The remark may be applicable to the region of pine land lying at the distance of several miles from the rivers, but certainly does not apply to the settlements on and near either of them. Winchester, which is represented as being *three hundred miles* from the mouth of Chickasaha, is only sixty miles! The country adjacent to Winchester, is truly stated to be rich, and comparatively thickly settled. It must be admitted that the plantations on the Pascagoula are not extensive; but the cause may be found in the circumstances of new settlers in a country enjoying very limited advantages of trade, in consequence of the obstructed navigation of its principal river, &c. With the exception, however, of the bar at its mouth, the Pascagoula is navigable in its whole extent, for eight months of the year, by steam-boats, and at all times by keel-boats drawing from two to three feet water. The Chickasaha is navigable as far as Winchester, (60 miles above the junction,) and perhaps farther, at *all times*, by craft drawing two feet water, as is also Leaf river, as far as *Monroe*, a distance of about 80 miles above the junction. The lands on the Pascagoula are chiefly rich alluvial bottoms, subject to be overflowed by very high winter freshets, but above the reach of ordinary summer swells of the river. The highest freshets may be excluded, by slight *levees* or embankments thrown up on the margin of the river. These lands are finely adapted, from soil and climate, to the production of sugar cane, as has been amply tested by repeated successful experiments. Those upon the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, are well suited to the culture of cotton, which is the chief staple. Mill-seats abound on the numerous tributary streams, and the supply of pine, cypress, and oak timber, seems almost inexhaustible. Contiguous to the river settlements on the Pascagoula, are extensive natural meadows, where immense herds of cattle are pastured throughout the seasons, without more expense or trouble to the proprietors than the mere labor and care of collecting them for use or sale. No part of the Gulf coast, with which I am acquainted, is better suited to an extensive lumber trade with the West Indies and Mexico, than the south-eastern section of Mississippi, and particularly the country dependant on the navigation of the Pascagoula, when its harbor shall have been improved. A number of small vessels (schooners of from thirty to fifty tons burthen,) are constantly plying, at great disadvantage, between the settlements

on the east and west sides of the Bay and New Orleans, with cargoes of lumber, &c. notwithstanding the obstruction of the bar, which they overcome by lightening their vessels at great comparative expense. Was this obstruction removed so as to admit the entrance of vessels into the harbor, drawing seven feet water, a considerable and profitable trade between Pascagoula and New Orleans, the West Indies and Mexico, would soon be the consequence. The immense forests of yellow pine, cypress, white-oak, &c. now utterly useless, would immediately become valuable to the proprietors, and form an important item of commerce. The cotton raised on the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, and which now goes in wagons to Mobile, would find its way in steam-boats and barges to a market which would spring up at the outlet of the natural channel of that fine country. It has been truly stated in the Report, that "to furnish an egress by water, to the produce of the country, and to facilitate the importation of goods into the interior, is the object of the projected improvement." But the writer is much less correct in supposing that this important object is to be effected or intended to be effected by vessels or craft propelled by sails. No such idea ever entered the mind of any one practically acquainted with the difficulties of navigating narrow and crooked rivers. Steam-boats and keel-boats only, are the proper craft for such rivers as the Pascagoula and its tributaries. The opinion advanced in the report, as to the amount and value of the trade of the Pascagoula, also appears to be highly erroneous. "The trade of this river *may*, at some future period, be sufficient to furnish employment to a steam-boat, but it certainly is wholly inadequate to it at present." p. 7, Report. That the trade of the Pascagoula is quite limited at present, is certain; but the very cause why it is thus limited, constitutes a strong argument in favor of the projected improvement. Is the existing condition of that trade fairly attributable to an inherent deficiency in the objects of traffic and commerce? Let the facts herein disclosed, in reference to the various capacities and resources of the country, answer the inquiry. It is not, then, the want of objects or natural advantages for trade, but of proper facilities and incidental aids, that the industry and enterprise of this section of the country have been repressed and rendered un-availing. The report is quite erroneous in another important particular. "*Flat boats can, at all seasons, pass over the bar; two miles beyond which, at BELLEFONTAINE, is an excellent place for a dépôt, where vessels of a large size may come at all times.*" Report, p. 7. It is indeed true that *flat boats* can, at *all* seasons, pass over the bar; and it is also true that five (not two) miles beyond the bar, at *Bellefontaine*, on the *open bay*, vessels of a *large size* may come, at *all times* to anchor, at the distance of one mile from the shore; but it is equally certain that *Bellefontaine* is neither an excellent place for a *dépôt*, nor a *safe harbor*. It is an open anchorage in the bay, about one mile from the land's point, called Bellefontaine, exposed to the action of the southwesterly winds, which prevail during the autumnal or hurricane months, and sweep into the bay between Horn and Ship islands, with such violence as to compel the smaller vessels to seek a harbor

in the mouth of the river. The larger packets engaged in the coasting trade between New Orleans, Mobile, Pensacola, &c. are frequently shipwrecked, for want of a safe harbor between the Rigolettes and Mobile bay.

I will notice only one more error, and then dismiss the subject of the report. "In the event of the proposed improvements being made, &c. *before any advantage* can accrue therefrom, it will be necessary to remove the impediments to the navigation of the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers," &c. p. 9, Report. As before stated, with the exception of the bar at the mouth of Pascagoula, the navigation of that river, and of the Chickasaha and Leaf rivers, is, during the greater part of the year, free from any very serious obstructions; although it must be admitted that the adjacent country would be greatly benefited by the removal of logs, snags, and stooping trees on the banks, which impede the navigation at low stages of the water. But the great object, in the present condition of the country, is, *the removal of the bar at the outlet of the river*. Let this be effected, and the entire navigation, from the towns of Winchester and Monroe, to the Gulf of Mexico, will be open to a profitable commerce, which will as certainly follow, stimulating the industry and enterprise of the population, facilitating the settlement of the country, developing the resources, and calling into activity the latent energies of the State. But these are not all the benefits that will result from this important public improvement. The national domain bordering on these waters will be greatly enhanced in value, and produce a corresponding advantage to the Federal treasury. The coasting trade, too, will be benefited, in the increased protection which will be afforded by an additional harbor, in an exposed and perilous navigation.

The foregoing statement has been hastily prepared from a recollection of facts, derived from a residence of several years in the southeastern part of Mississippi, and the adjoining county in the State of Alabama. Should they prove in any degree useful to your State, I shall be highly gratified.

I have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

W. BARTON.

The Hon. THOS. H. WILLIAMS, and  
POWHATAN ELLIS.